1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

BETROTHAL AND TRIAL MARRIAGE.—The children are sometimes engaged by their respective parents while still in early infancy, even at the age of 5 or 6 years. The young boy makes his fiancée and her parents a small present, and helps them occasionally in their work. When she arrives at the age of puberty (about 10 years) he takes her as his wife. The man is considered a member of his wife's family and he goes to live in the house of his parents-in-law. When the family enlarges he will build a house of his own near by. Perhaps a misunderstanding of the above facts has led M. W. (309) to state that a system of trial marriage existed in those days among the Miskito. According to this author the probationary period lasted about two years, at the end of which a feast was prepared and then the union was considered legitimate, there being no ceremony. To-day the young man marries generally at the age of from 16 to 18, the girl at about 12.

WEDDING.—Exquemelin (Engl. edit.: 253; French edit.: II, 267–268) gives the following account of the marriage ceremony of the Miskito during the latter part of the seventeenth century. The father, after assuring himself that the lover was an expert hunter and fisher, ordered his daughter to bring a calabash of a beverage prepared from pineapples and honey; the suitor drank one-half of the contents and then tendered the remainder to his future wife to drink. According to this same author the buccaneers had the habit of buying a Miskito woman for a knife, ax, or hatchet, upon their arrival at Cabo Gracias a Dios. She was obliged to remain with him during the time he stayed at the settlement and to supply him with the products of the plantation, while he went out hunting and fishing. (Exquemelin, Engl. edit.: 249).

Among the Sumu the nuptial ceremony is performed by an elderly man who first gives the couple a long talk. Then the two aspirants join the thumb of the right hand, whereupon he separates their hands by cutting through with his own hand. There is no record of the chiefs having possessed the *jus primæ noctis* as appears to have been the case with the Chorotega (Orotiña) of the Pacific coast of Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Marriage with other tribes was not permitted in former days by the Sumu, and the children of strangers were killed. This accounts for the fact that the Sumu have kept themselves free from foreign admixtures, whereas the Miskito intermarry with all races and absorb everything. The Sumu are very jealous of their wives and until recent times did not allow them to converse with strangers.

MOTHER-IN-LAW TABOO.—As soon as the marriage ceremony has taken place the young Sumu husband must not speak any more to his mother-in-law, nor even look at her. When he is at home she remains in her own apartment, which is separated from the remainder

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

606 of the house by a partition of bark cloth or imported calico. After he has left she comes out and follows her usual occupations. Upon his return he must give warning by striking the boat with the paddle or pole before proceeding to the hut, and she retires immediately to her own apartment. When she returns from the plantation or from fishing she must likewise give notice, and he walks away for a few minutes, until she has reached her quarters. Should the two meet unexpectedly she will quickly throw a cloth over her head, and he will pass on, turning his face away from her. Should, however, he purposely look at her, or fail to give the prescribed warning upon his return, she will consider this an insult for which she will demand payment through a third person.

This custom appears to exist among all the Sumu subtribes; it is also found among the Miskito of the upper Rio Coco, who are largely mixed with the Sumu, but it has not been observed in other parts of the Mosquito Coast. The origin of this custom is somewhat obscure, and I was unable to obtain from the Indians any satisfactory explanation regarding it. The usual answer is that they observe it because it has been handed down to them by their ancestors. According to Grossmann (b: 4), each mother stands under the special protection of the tapir, who is angry at the man who has robbed her of her daughter, and only refrains from punishing him on condition that he never looks on her. Therefore the man who has looked on his mother-in-law is fated to meet his death from the enraged tapir, unless absolved by making a payment to the wronged woman.

In former days the same taboo existed among the Miskito between a man and his sister-in-law, the wife of his birth friend (*lapya*) and the wife of his covenant friend (*libra*); or between a woman and her brother-in-law, and the husbands of both her *lapya* and *libra*.

841 MENSTRUAL SECLUSION.—During the menstrual periods (M.: *mairin siknis* "woman sickness," *kati siknis* "monthly sickness"; S.: *tiñ dutni, tiñ dutka* "bad hand") the woman is considered unclean and she is shunned by her husband. She must not touch any food intended for other people, otherwise the latter may die. Formerly the young girl had to undergo certain puberty ordeals at the first menstrual period, but I was unable to obtain any details relating thereto.

When the Miskito woman is inconvenienced in the accustomed manner, she occupies a small temporary hut (M.: *tala watla* "blood house") built by her husband at a few hundred yards from the settlement. She remains there a couple of days. At night one of the other women joins her to keep her company, but to all the men, her husband included, the hut is taboo. While in this state of impurity the woman must not be seen by a sukya, for that would weaken the latter's connection with the spirits, and perhaps even cause his